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Garbage man to the government Secrets under wraps

By Rebecca Nappi
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WASHINGTON — Lewis Selis is a garbage man. On his desk sits a dirty yellow cup filled with what looks like wet stuffing from the inside of an old sofa.

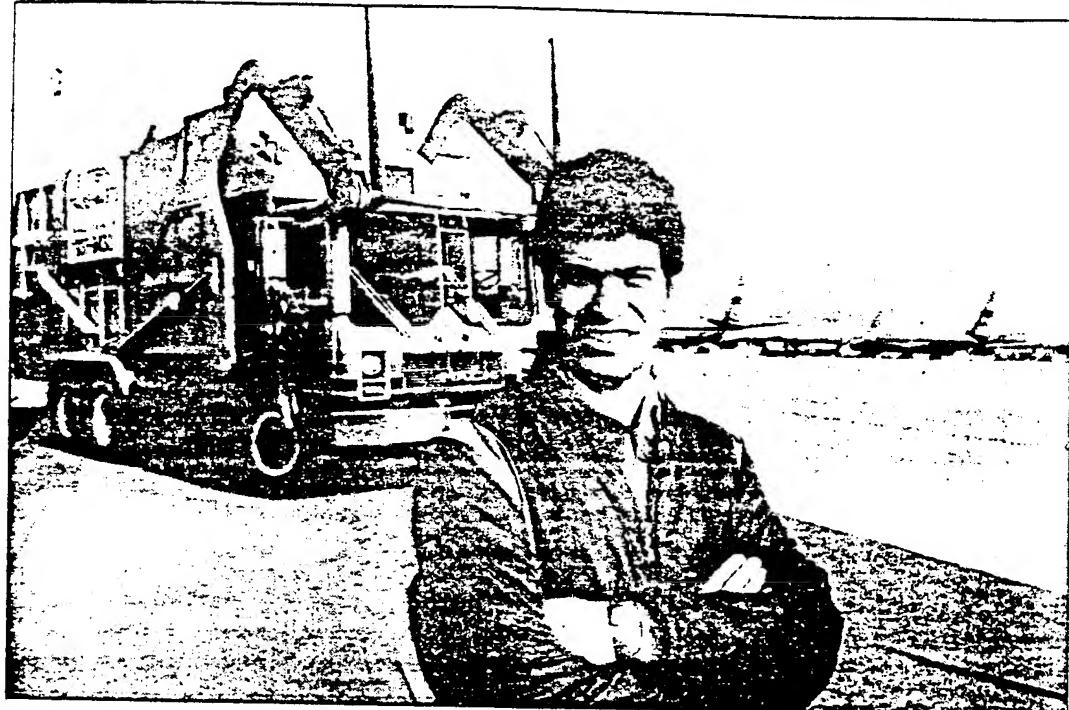
"CIA documents," the garbage man says and smiles.

Selis, president of Eastern Trans-Waste Corp., outside Washington, collects garbage at the CIA, the Pentagon and Andrews Air Force Base — landing spot for Air Force One.

"I don't dissect and see what they throw away. We pick up 40 to 80 tons a day — that would be an awful lot of reading. ... It's fun to go through a toy store's trash and see all those toys."

By the time Selis' employees empty the containers in the parking lots at these top-secret places, all the secrets have disintegrated. They are either mashed into mushy material or ground into a fine powder in shredding machines inside government buildings.

Selis' 40 employees do not need security clearances, though the government asks for Social Security numbers.



By Tim Dillon

TOP-SECRET TRASH: Lewis Selis, president of Eastern Trans-Waste Corp., disposes of trash accumulated by the CIA, the Pentagon and Andrews Air Force Base.

Almost daily, several of Selis' 22 trucks rumble to the three locations. The Pentagon has 11 containers of garbage; one contains top-secret mush. At the CIA, shredded secrets are emptied into two of eight containers and there are 300 garbage receptacles at Andrews Air Force Base, none classified.

On the filing cabinet in Selis' office, a sticker asks: "Have you hugged your garbage man today?" Selis, 34, has owned his company since 1971. Before he allowed a picture of his trucks, he washed and polished

them.

Because he was the lowest bidder, Selis won the contracts for the top-secret trash. But he also collects garbage from shopping centers and apartment complexes.

The White House, however, belongs to another collector.

"It's very restrictive at the White House. You have to go through a tunnel to pick it up," Selis said. "But I have seen the White House trash — most of it is food."

The CIA and Pentagon people do not like to share details about trash disposal inside

their complexes.

"The only thing I can say is that we have our own internal system that grinds up the classified papers until they are so fine that no one could put them back together," said Kathryn Riedel, CIA spokesman.

And at the Pentagon, no one seemed to know who was in charge of garbage.

"I don't think it would come under research and development, where I am," said a man who answered the phone at the Pentagon press office. "We handle a lot of garbage, but not that kind."